

THE GUILD OF ST. BARNABAS

IN CHARGE OF

S. M. DURAND

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WHAT TO DO WITH THE MARGIN

MANY kind and well-intentioned people seem to consider it necessary to approach nurses in one of two ways: they either exhort them to do their work from a high motive and be actuated by a strong sense of duty, or else they pity them most profusely and seem to feel that these unfortunates must at all costs be amused.

We all know that a sense of duty will do much to carry one on to the achievement of a hard task, and we also know that amusement and pleasure brighten and refresh us after the task is over.

Human nature is about the same the world over, and no one has a greater chance to study the ins and outs of character than those who see people in address, both figuratively and literally.

Many a tried soul who has had sad experience of the extremity to which a sufferer has been reduced by illness and pain before the final release has perused the panegyric published by way of obituary notice with very mixed feelings and perhaps a desire to do a little truth-telling.

It is the continual contact with the seamy side of life that often makes doctors and nurses such cynics as many of them unfortunately are. The experience of a hospital career is a very trying one in many ways, but perhaps the hardest part of it is the ruthless stripping away of so many of our illusions.

To see life and death as we do see them is a great tax on the charity and the faith of many; the trail of the serpent is so clearly over it all that our views of existence are not to be conserved and tainted at the very start.

When we go out into private nursing things mend somewhat, perhaps, but it is a life of very violent contrasts; we see much that is unlovely, much that saddens and worries us, and the edge of our sensibilities is still more blunted. When one has a case which has aroused her sympathy and affection and to which she has given more than money can pay for, it is a little hard to reflect that her life has touched that of others only at this one point, and only for a brief time; she feels her position to be somewhat anomalous, and sometimes has the bitter feeling of a child viewing a party from over the fence. It is all delightful, but it is not hers, except as she may be a spectator at the feast. To the unsympathetic it is all business, all in the day's work, and she hardens her heart and counts her money.

For a nurse to last well and to have compensations other than those of salary she must cultivate both philosophy and charity, and, more than that, she must have resources not only in the outside world, but also within that world which is only known to its possessor—i.e., within herself.

After all, it is not so much what we do or where we go, but what we are which determines our happiness or misery.

How often have we realized that though we take the wings of the morning we cannot get away from the ever-present ego which is sometimes such a hurda to us.

Were I to say what I think makes life most agreeable and lightens the everyday grayness of the horizon, I should unhesitatingly declare that we need to cultivate versatility.

When we get out of ourselves we find a thousand things that are more pleasant and profitable to think about. We see the sad results of morbidness in others, and we know that change of thought will do much for everyone. The tendency of nurses who live in the same house or visit one another to talk shop is absolutely deplorable, though no more so than the same tendency among school-teachers and others of a like profession. Life becomes a perfect treadmill when we not only do the same thing all the time, but talk about it in intervals of relaxation.

With our powers of observation, which we gain in a hard school, we should be keenly alive to every form of beauty.

You may say that you are too tired to do anything but rest between cases, but what is rest?

We all know how a few days of change of scene will rest us more than if we stayed in one place and thought how tired we were. Amusements which tax our strength may not always be judicious, but surely the open air, a pleasant book, a friend's society, are all refreshing if we would only think so. So many societies are formed for the improvement of nurses, the bettering of their professional status, etc., that in following out these worthy objects we are apt to forget our need as individuals.

In this strange, varied, yet ever interesting world of ours there are many things to help us all, many treasure-houses which may be unlocked if we will only find the key, and nothing so repays trouble as a little laying up in the vast receptacle of the human mind.

There are so many things to do and, above all, so many things to think about that we seem hardly able to make a beginning.

Surely it has often struck most of us as sad that those who live in the midst of the greatest beauty are often most impervious to its influence.

While visiting some of the lovely spots which abound in our fortunate country, one has been shocked by the callousness of the inhabitants, who seem to think "gush" the prerogative of the summer visitor. Thus it is in life. The struggle for existence is so hot that we settle down in our own little niche and never get out of it. Our youthful enthusiasms die, our cherished castles crumble, and we get into the sad habit of being what we are pleased to call *sensible*. Nothing less sensible than narrowing instead of broadening our lives can be conceived, and experience is meant to open fresh paths instead of shutting old ones. We cannot close our eyes to the sad facts of life, so let us be careful that we keep them open for all the goodness and beauty that come in our way.

Cultivation of the faculties and talents given us, living upon the highest point we can reach, and appreciation of all that may enliven and assist our climbing, sympathy and charity for our fellow-creatures, and trust that all the problems which puzzle and sadden us here will be smoothed out in the world towards which our longings tend—all this seems Utopian, perhaps, yet we know

that aspiration can only raise us, and the noblest lives are often the most commonplace to the casual observer.

THE BOSTON BRANCH held its Festival meeting at Emmanuel Church on the eve of St. Barnabas Day, and additional interest was given to the occasion by the presence of many visiting nurses, who were in the city to attend the convention of the *alumnae*. It was a great pleasure to us to welcome so many old friends and so many new ones at the same time. The church service was conducted by the chaplain and the sermon was preached by the Rev. F. C. Powell, S.S.J.E., who has been for some years a priest-associate of the English Guild of St. Barnabas and was chaplain of the branch in South Africa during his mission work there. The lesson given to us was that nurses, to be really happy in their work, must learn to look for the deeper spiritual joy which comes from doing our work as it should be done. We all know it has its trials, and they frequently make us think that all is dark and dreary along the paths, not only of invalids themselves, but of those who try to relieve pain and illness. That there is a joy in self-sacrifice is evident to all who have learned to make the sacrifice with any degree of willingness—a grudging service is anything but acceptable. A nurse's work must be done on a high plane and from noble motives if it is to be a blessing either to herself or others, and I am sure we looked upon our path in life as capable of being trodden near the mountain tops when we heard Father Powell's account of some of the heroic devotion he had known of nurses in South Africa. It is these noble deeds of hidden lives that wake us from a humdrum way of regarding existence as a very tame affair, and persuade us of the truth in the words of John Keble:

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

At our social gathering good-fellowship abounded and nurses from all sections of the country greeted one another with pleasure. As the JOURNAL goes to press before our September meeting is held we have no news to contribute, but trust our members will bring back from their summer rest and travel a store of strength and courage for the winter's work.

It is now some time since we have mentioned the progress of the Sick Relief Association of the Boston Branch of the guild. It has gone on steadily during its many years of usefulness, and no year has passed since it was established in 1891 in which at least one benefit has not been paid. It has very decidedly proved its *raison d'être* as far as our own branch is concerned. During the past year much thought has been given as to how we might extend its usefulness, therefore, as several of the smaller branches find it unwise to begin an association of this sort, it was unanimously decided at the annual meeting in June to alter our constitution so that any member of the guild at large in good standing in her own branch might join this Relief Association. It was further voted to change the name from Sick Relief to Massachusetts Relief Association. The secretary, Miss A. O. Tippet, 6 McLean Street, Boston, will gladly furnish any information concerning it to those interested.

While so many projects for nurses' pensions, retiring funds, etc., are agitating and being agitated in our midst, it would seem wise to cast a considering eye on this department of the guild work.

We so often hear it said that only in union can there be strength that the remark has become a trite one, yet the beauty of organization can only be realized by considering a common bond and following a common interest. Quoting from the last report of the Sick Relief Association (as its name then stood) of the Boston Branch, we learn that: "Among the questions discussed have been: an endowed bed for nurses in some hospital; a home for aged and invalid nurses; the amount of the benefit to be paid in case of death, which, as it now stands, some consider inadequate; the disposal of the funds of the association. . ."

Now these are all questions which vitally concern the guild at large, and in the fuller future which the broader organization of our association seems to promise, why should they not be discussed by all those interested in the matter? It would seem very much more worth while to have a central Sick Relief Association or incorporated body than to have several more or less widely separated and necessarily circumscribed bodies. With more members and consequently larger funds, the undertaking would be much better as a business investment, certainly, and would thus prove a greater bond of union among the branches.

Nurses do well to provide for the future, yet how many of us know that we are seldom ready for the emergency which often comes so swiftly and with so little warning.

We hope this matter will be fully discussed at our approaching council.

NEWPORT BRANCH.—At the May meeting of the Guild of St. Barnabas in Newport the chaplain, Rev. Henry M. Stone, resigned his office on account of ill-health, and Rev. Gilbert W. Laidlaw was nominated by the guild. The annual meeting was held in June at Kay Chapel of Trinity Church, the business meeting being directly after the service in the Parish-House. Announcement was made of the confirmation by the chaplain-general of Rev. Mr. Laidlaw's nomination as chaplain. Miss Elizabeth B. Smith was reelected secretary and treasurer, and an Entertainment Committee and delegates and alternates to the next general council were chosen. In July the meeting was held at St. George's Church, and after the service the guild adjourned to the home of Miss Mary Hazard, where all enjoyed refreshments and a social hour. The membership of the guild in Newport is steadily growing; several nurses have been initiated at each of the past few meetings. By the kindness of Mrs. Hamilton F. Webster the members of the guild will have an opportunity to meet the chaplain-general on the fourth of September, when the guild service will be held in St. John's Church, and the chaplain-general will address the members.

